

THE CASE FOR SHARED LEADERSHIP

Vision 2020 advocates for men and women to work together to reach the goal of gender parity in the workplace. BY CYNDE MUNZER

They say it's lonely at the top – but it doesn't need to be. So says Vision 2020, which advocates making equality a national priority through “shared leadership” among women and men.

The shared leadership concept is a key goal of Vision 2020, a national non-partisan 10-year initiative launched last year at the group's first annual Congress in Philadelphia by the Institute for Women's Health and Leadership at Drexel University College of Medicine. Vision 2020 will hold its second annual Congress on October 11-13, 2011; more than 100 delegates from all 50 states are expected to attend the gathering, which will be held in Chicago.

“To advance the shared leadership mission, during the Chicago Congress, Vision 2020 will recognize five female/male pairs, nominated by the public, who demonstrate shared leadership and make a positive impact on their organizational cultures,” says ComEd President and COO Anne Pramaggiore, who is co-chair of the Chicago Host Committee responsible for planning the Chicago meeting. These pairs will be awarded Equality in Action medals in recognition of their efforts. In the role as co-chair of the Chicago Host Committee, Ms. Pramaggiore is joined by Melinda Johnson, director of administrative operations for Vision 2020 in Philadelphia, and myself.

“ComEd and our parent, Exelon Corporation, strongly share in Vision 2020's belief that America is at its best when leadership is shared and opportunities are open to all,” adds Ms. Pramaggiore. The Exelon Foundation is a corporate partner in Vision 2020 and is serving as a “Forger of the Future” in the initiative.

Both ComEd and Exelon exemplify the shared leadership concept. At ComEd, Ms. Pramaggiore serves as president and chief operating officer; Frank Clark is chairman and chief executive officer. At Exelon, Ruth Ann Gillis is executive vice president and chief diversity officer for Exelon Corporation and president of Exelon Business Services Company, as well as part of the company's Executive Committee reporting to John Rowe, chairman and chief executive officer of Exelon Corporation.

Ms. Gillis plays an active role in Vision 2020 as a Visionary Delegate for Illinois and one of 13 national leaders who make up its Leadership Circle. “In my 14

years at Exelon, I've learned so much from CEO John Rowe about the business, leadership and how to translate Exelon's vision into specific direction for the company,” she says. “I've benefited significantly from his guidance and, in turn, feel strongly about mentoring others, particularly those with the potential to be highly successful leaders.”

In my case, I recently joined Chicago's Aronberg Goldgehn Davis & Garmisa as a partner, and the firm's reputation for mentoring young female attorneys was a key factor in joining the firm. I was impressed by a recent magazine article quoting female associates at the firm praising the mentoring they received from prominent litigation partner William Serritella Jr., who chairs the firm's litigation department. I felt that the firm demonstrated a bona fide interest and commitment to grooming the younger women attorneys to become future leaders.

Vision 2020 Illinois Delegate, Nuria Fernandez, senior vice president of CH2M Hill, notes that the shared leadership concept is not limited to corporate America, but also applies to the non-profit and public sectors. She points to the City of Chicago's leadership as an excellent example of shared leadership: City Treasurer Stephanie Neely and newly-elected City Clerk Susana Mendoza are working closely with new Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

“It's exciting to see that two out of the three city-wide elected offices in the City of Chicago are, for the first time in history, held by women, says Ms. Mendoza, who is Chicago's first female city clerk. “I feel that Mayor Emanuel has embraced the diversity of our make-up, both in terms of gender and race, and is understanding of the fact that by combining our different strengths into a focused agenda, the people of the City of Chicago will be better served.”

The five leadership team honorees will be recognized during a “Kudos & Comedy” program on Wednesday, October 12 at the Vision 2020 meeting featuring a special performance by Second City at Chase Tower. Each individual who nominates a team will receive a ticket to Kudos & Comedy.

During a recent meeting between Vision 2020 co-chair Rosemarie Greco and Vision 2020 supporters, she frequently quoted her favorite line from Vision 2020 Illinois Delegate Connie Lindsey, executive vice president of The Northern Trust Company and national president of Girl Scouts of the USA: “We've admired the problem long enough. Now it's time for us to come to a solution.” Vision 2020 believes that shared goals and work between male and female leadership is just such a solution. ■

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